

United States Government

Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: July 26, 2002

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-83) Chief Joseph-Monroe and Chief Joseph-Snohomish, 55/3 to 64/5

TO: Tom Murphy - TFS/Bell-1
Natural Resource Specialist

Proposed Action: Vegetation Management along the Chief Joseph-Monroe and Chief Joseph-Snohomish, 55/3 to 64/5, Transmission Line ROW. The line is a 500 kV and 345 kV Double Circuit Transmission Line having an easement width of 225 feet. The proposed work will be accomplished in the indicated sections of the transmission line corridor.

Location: The ROW is located in Chelan County, WA, being in the Spokane Region.

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation in the rights-of-ways and around tower structures that may impede the operation and maintenance of the subject transmission line. All work will be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards. BPA plans to conduct vegetation control with the goal of removing tall growing vegetation that is currently or will soon be a hazard to the transmission line. BPA's overall goal is to have low-growing plant communities along the rights-of-way to control the development of potentially threatening vegetation.

Analysis: This project meets the standards and guidelines for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

Planning Steps

1. Identify facility and vegetation management need.

The work involved will be to clear tall growing vegetation that is currently or will soon pose a hazard to the lines and selectively eliminating tall growing vegetation *before* it reaches a height or density to begin competing with low-growing vegetation. All work will take place in existing rights-of-ways.

Also, all off right-of-way trees that are potentially unstable and will fall within a minimum distance or into the zone where the conductors swing will be removed. All work will be accomplished by selective vegetation control methods to assure that there is little potential harm to non-target vegetation and to low-growing plants. Desirable low-growing plants will not be disturbed. The work will provide system reliability.

The vegetation control is designed to provide a 10-year maintenance free interval. The overall vegetation management scheme will be to initially clear and remove all tall growing brush utilizing machine and hand cutting methods as outlined in the attached checklist.

Future cycles - As tall growing species are controlled, a 10-year entry treatment will be needed. Also a review of Danger trees and other hazards will take place at that time.

2. *Identify surrounding land use and landowners/managers.*

Primary adjacent land use is forest management for timber production. Minor contiguous acreages are held in dispersed/residential tracts. The subject corridor traverses USFS, Wenatchee National Forest and managed lands. During routine patrols, tall, encroaching trees and vegetation issues are identified and marked. If a danger or reclaim tree is identified as a potential threat to the integrity of the transmission line, appropriate action to remove the tree is taken. Landowners were notified of the upcoming work by letters, telephone and on-site meetings. All issues seem to be resolved at this time.

3. *Identify natural resources.*

Several water resources (i.e. rivers/creeks) have been identified between spans 57/3 to 57/4 and 60/4 to 61/1. T&E/wildlife issues, visually sensitive areas, cultural resources or other natural resource issues have been identified along the work corridor. A Fish, Wildlife, and Sensitive Plant Report and Biological Evaluation of the project work corridor have been prepared and issues concerning wildlife, fish and plants have been addressed. In addition, an Essential Fish Habitat Assessment has been prepared and is included as an attachment in the previous mentioned report. Based on the report, work within the project corridor is expected to have “no effect” on any listed species or any Forest Service Sensitive species; therefore there would be no cumulative effects for any TES species within the project corridor.

Prior to the beginning of the work, the contractor will be provided with a set of the project maps, as well as with a list of management prescriptions from the Vegetation Management EIS.

4. *Determine vegetation control and debris disposal methods.*

A licensed contractor would undertake the proposed work. The unwanted vegetation would be removed by employing manual selective cutting methods along selected spans of the right-of-way.

Debris will be dispose by:

Chip – Mechanical brush disposal unit cuts brush into chips 4 inches or less in diameter and spread over the ROW, piled on ROW or trucked off site. Trunks too large for the chipper are limbed and the limbs chipped. Trunks are placed in rows along the edge of the right-of-way or scattered, as the situation requires.

Mulched – Mulching is a debris treatment that falls between chipping and lop and scatter. The debris is cut into 1 to 2 foot lengths, scattered on the right-of-way and left to decompose. This method is used when terrain and conditions do not allow the use of mechanical chipping equipment.

5. Determine revegetation methods, if necessary.

No revegetation will be conducted at this time due to very low ground disturbance but will be continually assessed as the project progresses. All equipment to be power washed to prevent the spread of weeds.

6. Determine monitoring needs.

Anticipate on-site monitoring to ensure targeted vegetation is controlled. If significant mineral earth disturbance is encountered, grass seeding, with a mixture from the Soil Conservation Service and USFS will be re-seeded to the exposed areas.

7. Prepare appropriate environmental documentation.

This Supplement Analysis finds that 1) the proposed actions are substantially consistent with the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285) and ROD, and; 2) there are no new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed actions or their impacts. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Michael A. Rosales

Michael A. Rosales

Environmental Protection Specialist - KEPR

CONCUR: /s/ Thomas C. McKinney

Thomas C. McKinney

NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: 08/01/2002

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Environmental File - KEC-4

Official File - KEP-4 (EQ-14)

Vegetation Management Checklist

1. IDENTIFY FACILITY AND THE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT NEED

1.1 Describe Right-of-way.

Corridor Name	Corridor Length & kV	Easement width	Miles of Treatment
Chief Joseph – Monroe & Chief Joseph - Snohomish	CHJO-MONE: 500kV CHJO-SNHO: 345kV	225 ft.	Nine

Vegetation on approximately 3.5 miles will be controlled.

1.2 Describe the vegetation needing management.

Primarily Ponderosa Pine and Douglas Fir. Minor amount of Alder, Cottonwood, Poplar, and Willow. Vegetation density is moderate, ranging from 5ft. x 5ft. spacing to 15ft. x 15ft. spacing. Noxious weeds are present on approximately 25% of the travel ways open to the public. BPA is cooperating with local weed control districts, private landowners, and land management agencies to control noxious weeds in the corridor.

1.3 List measures you will take to help promote low-growing plant communities. If promoting low-growing plants is not appropriate for this project, explain why.

Except for travel ways and structure sites, protect low-growing vegetation.

Control tall-growing vegetation.

1.4 Describe overall management scheme/schedule..

Critical height, localized site vegetation control occurred on this corridor 5 years ago. Anticipate programmatic re-entry in approximately 10 years.

2. IDENTIFY SURROUNDING LAND USE AND LANDOWNERS/MANAGERS

2.1 List the types of landowners and land uses along your corridor.

Primary adjacent land use is forest management for timber production. Minor contiguous acreages are held in dispersed/residential tracts. Approximately 60% of adjacent ownership is USFS, Wenatchee National Forest, managed lands.

2.2 Describe method for notifying right-of-way landowners and requesting information (i.e., doorhanger, letter, phone call, e-mail, and/or meeting). Develop landowner mail list, if appropriate.

Methods of notification include letters, phone calls, and on-site meetings.

2.3 List the specific land owner/landuse measures — determined from the handbook or through your consultations with the entities — that will be applied.

Span		Landowner/use	Specific measures to be applied
To	From		
56/2	56/3	Access	I.o. Requests vegetation cutting not impact slope stability.
55/3	55/4	Protected vegetation	I.o requests special consideration to minimize cutting on property.
62/1	62/2	Protected vegetation	I.o requests special consideration regarding alleged past management practices of right-of-way.
64/5	64/4	Protected vegetation	I.o. Requests screen trees be left in place to obstruct view of transmission line.

Review any existing landowner agreements (e.g. tree/brush Permits or Agreements). List in table above any provisions that need to be followed and where they are located.

Landowner agreements have been reviewed. Discussions regarding compliance (tree agreements) and negotiations (access road maintenance agreements) are ongoing.

List any known casual informal use of the right-of-way by non-owner publics. List any constraints or measure’s to take due to the informal use.

Tree growing operations (not previously permitted by BPA) are occurring within the right-of-way. Discussions regarding the operations are ongoing.

2.4 List other potentially affected people, agencies, or tribes (that are not landowners/managers) that need to be notified or coordinated with.

Inquiries were made to Colville and Spokane Tribes. Their only interest was a request that project manager report any potential historically significant field identifications to their office. Village of Plain, Washington, desires to formulate a noxious weed control action plan. Discussions are ongoing to cooperatively draft an action plan.

Landowner near Nason Creek claims his land-sustained losses when BPA constructed transmission lines. Discussions with landowner will be re-initiated by project manager (Murphy).

3. IDENTIFY NATURAL RESOURCES

3.1 List any water resources (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) that may be impacted by vegetation control activities. For each water body describe the control methods and requirements or mitigation measures that will be used.

Only tall growing vegetation will be controlled, that at maturity will grow to a height that could endanger the safe operation of the transmission line. All vegetation control will be selective. Where possible, a lower canopy of vegetation will be undisturbed in order to minimize the exposure of direct sunlight to water resources. All live stream courses shall be considered to be potential T & E bearing waterbodies. Accordingly, all activities will be performed to minimize any effects to vegetation in the riparian habitats.

Span		Waterbody	T&E?	Method	Herbicide	Application Technique	Buffer	Other
To	From							
57/3	57/4	Wenatchee River	Yes	Manual Cut	N/A	N/a	N/A	2 dt's to be cut. Low growing will be undisturbed
60/4	61/1	Nason Creek	Yes	Manual Cut	N/A	N/A	50.ft.	All vegetation less than 10 ft. will be undisturbed

3.2 If planning to use herbicides, list locations of any known irrigation source, wells, or springs (landowners maybe able to provide this info if requested).

No herbicide use is planned.

3.3 List below the areas that have Threatened or Endangered Plant or Animal Species and the name of the species, and any special measures that need to be taken due to their presence. Attach any BAs, T&E maps, or letters from US Fish and Wildlife.

Span		T&E Species	Method/mitigation or avoidance measures
To	From		
		Pacific Big-eared Bat. Spotted Owl. Lynx Bald Eagle Marbled Murrelet	See attached biological evaluation for discussion.

3.4 List any other measures to be taken for enhancing wildlife habitat or protecting species.

Migratory land birds. Ungulates. Riparian dependent wildlife species: see attached BE for discussion.

Span		Species	Measures
To	From		
			See immediately above.

3.5 List any visually sensitive areas and the measures to be taken at these areas.

Span		Describe sensitivity	Method/mitigation measures
To	From		
			See section 2.3.

3.6 List areas with cultural resources and the measures to be taken in those areas.

Colville and Spokane Tribes have been consulted regarding this project. No known cultural resources in or near project area. Documentation is on file at the Regional Office.

Span		Describe sensitivity	Method/mitigation measures
To	From		
			See immediately above.

3.7 List areas with steep slopes or potential erosion areas and the measure and methods to be applied in those areas.

Approximately 20% of project area has erosion potential. Where side slopes exceed 60%, surface activity will be minimized.

Span		Describe sensitivity	Method/mitigation measures
To	From		
59/5	56/1	Scattered locations of high potential due to steep gradient.	Machine operation on steep slopes will be reduced. Operation will be primarily along and parallel to gradient lines. Manual vegetation control will be utilized as needed.

3.8 List areas of spanned canyons and the type of cutting needed.

See Handbook – **Spanned Canyons** for requirements.

Span		Methods, cutting
To	From	
		Incidental tree cutting in spanned canyons will be performed manually.

4. DETERMINE VEGETATION CONTROL METHODS

4.1 List Methods that will be used in areas not previously addressed in steps above.

Span		Methods
To	From	
64/4	45/1	175 acres on right-of-way will be controlled using a combination of methods employing manual cutting and mechanized hydro-axe.

5. DETERMINE DEBRIS DISPOSAL AND REVEGETATION

Describe the debris disposal methods to be used and any special considerations.

All debris will be chipped or mulched due to wildfire potential.

5.2 List areas of reseeding or replanting (those areas not already described in steps 1, 2, or 3).

Span		Reason for Reseed/plant	Type of Seed or Plants	Native?
To	From			
		This is an ongoing assessment. Reseeding in the fall will commence as needed at the onset of fall precipitation.		

5.3 If not using native seed/plants, describe why.

N/A

5.4 Describe timing and any follow-up that will need to take place to ensure germination/success of seeding/planting.

Any re-seeded areas will be evaluated after potential germination to determine if follow-up seeding is needed.

6. DETERMINE MONITORING NEEDS

6.1 Describe the follow-up/monitoring cycle that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the vegetation control methods used.

Anticipate on-site monitoring to ensure targeted vegetation is controlled.

Describe any follow-up or monitoring needed to determine if mitigation measures were effective.

Significant exposure of mineral earth is not expected. If exposure is encountered, grass seeding, with a recommended mixture from the Soil Conservation Service and USFS will be re-seeded to the exposed areas.

7. PREPARE APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

No known potential effects different than those previously discussed.

7.1 Describe any potential project impacts or project work that are different than those disclosed in the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS. Describe how those differences impact natural resources and if the differences are “substantial”.

No other potential impacts.

7.2 Is there a need for additional NEPA documentation (i.e. Forest Service requirement, Record of Decision, supplemental EIS)?

No known additional need.